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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001665

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, INR/NESA
NSC FOR E. MILLARD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09-25-13

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [MV](#)

SUBJECT: Maldives: President Gayoom wins first phase
of presidential selection process

Refs: Colombo 1660, and previous

(U) Classified by James F. Entwistle, Deputy Chief of
Mission. Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

1. (U) Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom won the first phase of the country's presidential selection process on September 25. Gayoom took all 50 votes in the People's Majlis (Parliament). The three other candidates, Abdul Ghafoor Hussain, Mohammed Shareef, and Nazeer Ahmed Jamaal, failed to pick up any support. One candidate, Ibrahim Noori, was disqualified before the Majlis vote because he could not prove that his ancestors were Maldivian. Of the candidates, Gayoom was the only one who was well-known.

2. (U) With his victory, Gayoom now becomes the Majlis' official candidate for president. In the next and final phase of the process, Gayoom will face a "yes/no" national referendum on his candidacy. This referendum is slated to take place in the next two to three weeks. If he is successful, his inauguration would take place in November. Gayoom has won previous presidential referendums with over 90 percent of the vote.

3. (C) COMMENT: The Majlis vote was not unexpected and Gayoom, who has been in power since 1978, seems on course to win his sixth five-year term as president. The one caveat in this otherwise rosy picture for Gayoom is the sudden popping up of visible anti-government sentiment in the country, as exhibited in graphic form during the September 20 rioting in the capital Male (see Reftels). Even assuming a free-and-fair referendum (as those in the past appear to have been), anti-government elements probably do not have enough support to defeat Gayoom. They could, however, cause further problems on the street for Gayoom's regime with unpredictable consequences. END COMMENT.

4. (U) Minimize considered.

LUNSTEAD